

AirMagnum air rifle

The Umarex 850

by Technical Advisor Brendan Atkinson



The rifle was supplied with a Walther telescope and we tested the accuracy using this. We also shot a number of targets using the open fibre-optic sights as fitted.

I suppose it would be fair to say that many Australian shooters had their first experience with a firearm shooting a 'slug gun' in someone's backyard. Way back then, people saw no problem with youngsters controlling the local starling and 'spoggie' populations with their Daisy or Gecado .177 - how different it is now.

Let's be perfectly honest about it - air

rifles can be enjoyable things to shoot. They are relatively quiet, very accurate and the cost of bullets is cheap compared to rimfire and centrefires. While most air rifle pellets will be aimed at paper or other inanimate targets, it is possible to hunt with an air rifle, as long as humane kills are able to be achieved.

Like many firearm categories, there is a vast choice of air rifles to be had, rang-

ing from cheap imported items of dubious performance, to full-on competition outfits costing many thousands of dollars. As with many things these days, price is a pretty good indicator of quality.

There are two common sorts of air rifles: those that are fired by means of a spring and piston, needing to be re-cocked by a lever mechanism after each shot, and those that are powered by a cylinder of compressed gas. The latter have a number of advantages, not the least being the almost negligible recoil. However, the downside is the extra cost of having to purchase a pump or, in the case of the review rifle, a 'single use' can of compressed carbon dioxide (CO2).

The Umarex 850 AirMagnum is manufactured in Germany by Umarex Sportwaffen GmbH & Company and employs the abovementioned method of a can of CO2 for propulsion. It is a bolt-action repeater with a rotary drum magazine and can fire eight shots without reloading.

The review rifle was in .177-calibre and weighed just less than 5lb 12oz. The barrel was 23.6" long and the overall length was just less than 41". One can see from this that the 850 is a full-size rifle and yes, it's a serious piece of equipment.

The trigger is fully adjustable and requires no dismantling to perform this task, but a small screwdriver is required. The safety is at the rear of the action and locks the trigger - it is applied every time the rifle is fired and the action cycled. Yes, this is a pain in the you know where, as you have to remember every time you



The action of the bolt shown here in the open position, as the pin that pushes pellets into the chamber can be clearly seen. The slide below the bolt is the lock for the drum magazine.

The Umarex 850

amaze me the sort of accuracy that a good air rifle can be capable of. We tested a number of brands and weights of pellets and in most cases had five shots touching. With the top-of-the-line match-grade stuff, some remarkable groups were shot. Shooters may have seen some of the 10-shot group cards that are supplied with the more expensive types of air rifles - these are usually shot with the rifle sitting in a machine rest and can be incredibly small groups.

Even cheaper and hunting-type pellets



These pellets were supplied with the rifle. The drum magazine on the bottom right has been loaded with eight pellets and is ready for use.

shot extremely well in the 850, but one must be aware that changing the pellet shape usually means a slightly different impact point on the target. Air rifles seem particularly sensitive to any small changes and if changing pellet, one must always check the sighting on paper.

Some accessories are available for the 850, such as additional drum magazines and adaptors to suit smaller CO2 capsules. Check with your favourite gunshop for availability and cost, as this may vary considerably.



The standard fibre-optic sights as supplied stand out well and are adjustable at both front and rear when required.

Conclusions

Some may call this an entry-level gas gun, but the way it shoots, who cares? It is as accurate as the shooter will let it be. We checked with a local gunshop and was told that they retail the 850 for \$635 and a pack of two extra drum magazines will cost \$52. For this kind of money, this has got to be one of the best 'bang for your buck' deals around.

Umarex air rifle supplied by Frontier Arms. ●

Specifications

Manufacturer: Umarex Sportwaffen, Arnsberg, Germany

Model: 850 AirMagnum

Calibre: .177

Velocity: Up to 230m/s

Action: Bolt-action repeater

Magazine: Rotary drum eight-shot capacity

Barrel: Chrome moly

Stock: Black composite, with cheek-piece and buttpad

Price: \$635